



Chatham County, NC

Legislation Text

File #: 17-2258, **Version:** 1

Legislative public hearing to consider an extension of a temporary moratorium on oil and gas development activities within Chatham County adopted in August 2015 until August 16, 2018 and vote on a request to adopt the Fracking Moratorium Ordinance.

Public hearing to consider an extension of a temporary moratorium on oil and gas development activities within Chatham County adopted in August 2015 August 16, 2018.

Action Requested:

Introduction & Background:

In August 2015, the Board of Commissioners adopted an ordinance instituting a temporary moratorium on oil and gas development activities within Chatham County. Section 7 of the moratorium includes two tasks to be completed during the moratorium.

Discussion & Analysis:

The moratorium expiration is 24 months from the adoption date, which is August 2017. The two tasks listed under section 7 are as follows:

- a) **Studies:** The Board of Commissioners will hire a consultant or consultants with expertise regarding fracking and other oil and gas development activities and their impacts on the natural, man-made, and social environments and its economic benefits and costs. The consultant(s) will be tasked to study Chatham County and to analyze state and federal regulatory programs and to prepare a report for the Board regarding the full range of expected impacts on Chatham County, including financial impacts. The study will include the most current analysis of impacts in localities similar to Chatham County in other states and the effectiveness of local ordinances in managing these impacts. This study and report should be completed within the first year of the moratorium and will include the consultant's conclusions as to whether additional time is needed for thorough study.
- b) **Development of Conditional Use Ordinance:** Upon completion of the study and report. The Board intends to develop a draft conditional use ordinance and/or other ordinances based on the report and the consultant's advice which will be coordinated with the revisions to the County's comprehensive zoning ordinance. The draft ordinance will be made for public review and comment and at least one public hearing will be held. Based on public comments the Board will finalize the ordinance and initiate the adoption procedure. Development of the ordinance and final approval is estimated to take one year.

On June 13, 2017 the county held a meeting with the consultant currently under contract to address the first task. The attendees included the Board of Commissioners, Climate Change Committee, Environmental Review Advisory Committee, Agriculture Advisory Board, Planning Board, and Board of Health. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on the study, outline current findings, and present new information that has been generated since adoption of the moratorium. The meeting also provided an opportunity for county boards and committees, as well as the public, an opportunity

to ask questions of the consultant in advance of preparation of the final report. It is anticipated that the report will be completed by the end of June and presented to the

Board of Commissioners in August.

During the presentation on June 13, the Board received new information about the impacts of natural gas exploration in Chatham County including updated information from the NC Geologic Survey (a copy of the presentation is attached). On June 19, 2017 received an update from staff on the status of the moratorium and voted 4-0 to schedule a public hearing to consider an extension of the moratorium. A draft ordinance extending the moratorium has been provided as an attachment.

Recommendation:

Hold the hearing and consider adoption of an ordinance extending the temporary moratorium on oil and gas development activities within Chatham County.